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SUBJECT: OBSERVATIONS FROM SRI LANKA/MALDIVES DELEGATES  
REGARDING ATA COUNTER TERRORISM LEGISLATION SEMINAR

REF: STATE 189710

1. (U) From September 8 to September 13, AmEmbassy Colombo Assistant Regional Security Officer, Philippe Furstenberg, accompanied delegations from Sri Lanka and Maldives to Washington, D.C. for an ATA counter-terrorism legislation seminar. Per reftel request the following observations were provided by members of the delegation to the A/RSO both during and after the seminar:
  2. (U) Both delegations noted the importance of conducting the CT seminar in a regional context. Many conversations between delegations during coffee breaks and over lunch resulted in relationships developed among regional counterparts.
  3. (U) With very little exception, both delegations felt the CT seminar was extremely valuable and worthwhile. It became apparent that the five participating countries differed greatly in their state of legislative drafting. Sri Lanka was among the countries with the most comprehensive counter-terrorism laws. This is in large part due to the 20-year war Sri Lanka has been engaged in against an FTO-listed terrorist group. The Maldives, on the other hand, does not even have a formal criminal code and needs further assistance developing the legal framework for countering terrorism.
  4. (U) Nonetheless, much of the conversation within both the Sri Lankan and Maldivian delegations centered around enforcement assistance. There was widespread belief that assistance with creation of immigration and criminal databases to track known and potential terrorists would be of great value. Further integration of this database with regional partners would be of additional import.
  5. (U) Sri Lanka and the Maldives noted their lack of sophistication in attacking money laundering. A comprehensive law is in the final stages of development in both countries, but the issue of enforcement is clearly a weak point. Sri Lanka and the Maldives request assistance with creation and training of Financial Investigation Units (FIU)
  6. (U) Sri Lanka further emphasized its wish to conclude a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) with the United States.
  7. (U) Since the seminar, the US Embassy in Sri Lanka has already taken action to assist the Maldives and Sri Lanka in their counter-terrorism efforts:
  8. (U) On September 30, 2002 the USG and the Attorney General of the Maldives signed a grant proposal in which the USG will provide two slots to the Maldives Law Commission to attend the Tulane University Legislative Drafting course in New Orleans. This proposal was crafted in part due to the immediate feedback given to the U.S. Embassy regarding the ATA course. Conversations with one delegate from the Maldives and member of the Law Commission noted that several important CT laws have been preliminarily drafted and await refinement by the law commission. This includes a securities act, a telecommunications act, a customs act and a civil aviation act. The proposal for FY ,03 will assist in reducing the back log and tightening the Maldives counter-terrorism posture.
  9. (U) In addition, a State Department-funded Sri Lanka Police management and organization proposal (principally geared at counter-narcotics) has been more than doubled. An expected \$400,000 will be spent in FY ,03 to improve the Police's ability to track crime and share criminal intelligence.
  10. (U) Both the Maldives and Sri Lanka appreciate any USG assistance that can be provided. Whether through the extremely successful ATA program, INL or any other source, both countries could use assistance with enforcement training and legislative drafting.
  11. (U) The seminar was a good beginning that we look forward to capitalizing on.
- WILLS